

Canine Bulletin

Nebraska Task Force - 1

September 2004

K9 Kelly

Submitted by: Elaine Sawtell

Back in the early nineties, the prerequisite for a FEMA disaster search canine was at least a year's experience as an operational wilderness search dog.

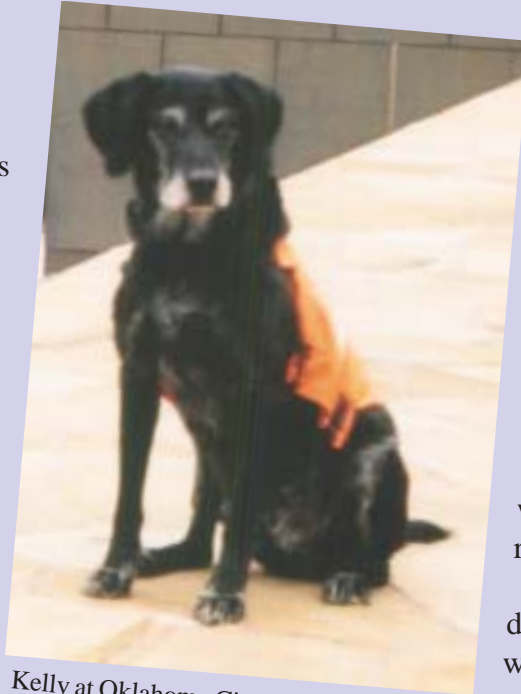
One of the teams NETF1 was fortunate to recruit was Vickie Senters and K9 Kelly, members of Missouri Search & Rescue K9, South Region. They brought a wealth of experience in wilderness, cadaver (land and water), and evidence search. Kelly was a classic, multi-purpose wilderness search dog with the heart for the job.

Vickie was the type of handler with quiet confidence in her dog and the willingness and ability to complete the mission. They began training with NETF1 for disaster search in 1993 and attended the Canine Search Specialist School in Camp Atterbury, IN, in October 1994.

Vickie and Kelly deployed twice with NETF1; first to Hurricane Opal in 1995, and to the DeBruce Grain Elevator explosion in 1998, where they worked long hours in the tunnels and surrounding fields.

Distance and family commitments force hard choices for all of us. Vickie and Kelly retired from NETF1 in 1998. However, Vickie continues to be an asset to our task force, always willing to be a victim, care for a teammate's dog on a moment's notice, listen to frustrations with the system or give a word of encouragement when needed.

In February of this year, as Vickie and I watched our canine partners grow old together, we decided to visit the Oklahoma City National Memorial. It was the first visit for both of us. Kelly, 15 years old, and Ditto, almost 13, were accorded VIP treatment by the Memorial staff and the 5-star hotel where we stayed. Both old girls seemed to enjoy the attention and



Kelly at Oklahoma City National Memorial, 2004.

respect they received from visitors, museum personnel and the hotel staff. It was a bittersweet trip for us.

15 years is a good long life for a dog. It's a big chunk of a person's life too. Kids grow up, get married, grandkids come; and through it all, your canine partner is there. Instantly alert when a midnight phone call brings out the search gear, ready to go with you to do the chores, waiting patiently when a grandchild's ball game replaces a walk in the field.

Over the years, Ditto and Kelly did many searches together, wilderness, water, cadaver, evidence. In March and April of 2003, they worked side by side on a high profile, 11-year-old murder case.

So it is fitting they were together on their last search. May 4, 2003, the Pierce City, MO, tornado. Although unspoken, Vickie and I both knew the time had come for retirement. Though their hearts still beat for the mission, it was time for young, strong dogs to do the job.

Vickie, Kelly and I were together at the end. Yes, 15 years is a long time. But looking back, it seems like only yesterday when we began this journey.

(More pictures on Page 2.)





Vickie & Kelly at CSS school in 1994.



Kelly in lowering harness at CSS school in 1994.



Hurricane Opal, 1995



Kelly lowered into tunnel at DeBruce, 1998



After a successful cadaver search for MSHT, 1998



Buried for 2 hours, victim Vickie is "rescued", NETF1 pretest 2002

How Do I Submit Items for the Canine Bulletin

Mail, E-mail, or Fax items to:

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Mail your
training logs to:
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New Sign in Springfield

Submitted by: Elaine Sawtell

Once again, Conco Quarries has improved our Springfield training site. In addition to expansion of our rubble pile, a new sign has been erected identifying who we are and our mission. Thank you, Conco!